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ABSTRACT-

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) provided data on the employment experience and other characteristics of a nationally representative sample of 9,022 young men and women who were between 12 and 16 years old on December 31, 1996. The NLSY focused on four aspects of youth's lives: overall employment; employment while in school; educational experiences; and home characteristics. According to the NLSY, female youths were much less likely than male youths to hold an employee job at some time while age 14 or 15 and were more likely to engage in freelance jobs. From age 14 to age 15, youths moved toward more formal work arrangement: 24% of youths held an employee job at age 14 versus 38% at age 15. Twenty-eight percent of youths aged 14-16 worked during school and summer months, and 16% of youths who had attended ninth grade or higher in 1997, had been involved in gifted and talented programs. Youths between the ages of 12 and 15 spent an average of 17 hours per week watching television but only 11 hours doing homework or reading for pleasure combined. Working youths watched less television than their nonworking counterparts did. (MN)

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EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTHS: RESULTS FROM A NEW LONGITUDINAL SURVEY

More than half (57 percent) of youths participate in some type of work activity while age 14, and nearly two-thirds (64 percent) work at some point while age 15, according to a new survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Work, as defined in the survey, can include "employee" jobs, in which youths have an on-going relationship with a particular employer, such as a restaurant or supermarket, and/or "freelance" jobs outside the home, where the youth is doing tasks such as baby-sitting or yard work.

These findings are from the first round of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, a nationally representative sample of 9,022 young men and women who were 12 to 16 years of age on December 31, 1996. The survey provides information on employment experiences, schooling, family background, social behavior, and other characteristics.

This release focuses on four aspects of the lives of these youths who were ages 12 to 17 when interviewed in 1997: overall employment, employment while in school, educational experiences, and home characteristics. Highlights from the longitudinal survey include:

- Female youths were much less likely than male youths to hold an employee job at some time while either age 14 or 15 and were more likely to engage in freelance jobs.
- From age 14 to age 15, youths moved toward more formal work arrangements, working more in employee jobs and less in freelance jobs. Twenty-four percent of youths held an employee job while age 14, and 38 percent of youths held an employee job while age 15.
- Twenty-eight percent of youths ages 14 to 16 worked during both school and summer months in 1996. On average, this group worked about 59 percent of all weeks during the school year.
- Sixteen percent of youths who had attended ninth grade or higher in 1997 had been involved in gifted and talented programs.
- Youths ages 12 to 15 spent an average of 17 hours per week watching television, but only 11 hours doing homework or reading for pleasure combined. Working youths spent less time watching television than those not working.

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Work Activity of Youths While 14 and 15

More than half (57 percent) of all youths worked in either employee jobs or freelance jobs or both at some point while age 14. (See table 1.) While age 14, the majority of young workers engaged in freelance jobs rather than employee jobs. The percent of youths who worked while age 15 increased to 64 percent, and their employment shifted away from freelance work and into employee jobs.

While age 14, 59 percent of female youths and 55 percent of male youths were engaged in work activities. Female youths were more likely than male youths to work in freelance jobs. The percent of 15-year-olds of both sexes who worked in employee jobs was notably higher than for 14-year-olds. However, female youths still were more likely to work at a freelance job. While age 15, nearly one-half of working females were employed only in freelance jobs, compared with approximately one-third of working males.

Differences in employment activities also are apparent by race and ethnic group. While age 14, 64 percent of whites engaged in work activities compared with 43 percent of blacks and 41 percent of Hispanics. While age 15, the percent of whites and of Hispanics who engaged in work activities was significantly higher (72 percent and 48 percent, respectively) than when age 14, but black employment remained nearly constant (44 percent).

The percent of youths who worked at employee jobs increased markedly between ages 14 and 15. (See table 2.) While age 14, 24 percent of youths worked at employee jobs compared with 38 percent of youths while age 15. Accompanying this increase in more formal employment was an increase in average real hourly earnings, from $5.53 to $5.71.

Although male youths were more likely than female youths to work at an employee job while age 14, both sexes worked the same number of weeks (25 weeks). While age 15, male youths worked slightly more weeks than female youths (27 and 24 weeks, respectively).

At these ages, whites were more likely to work at employee jobs than blacks or Hispanics, and, when employed, worked more weeks. While age 15, twice as many whites worked at employee jobs as blacks (44 percent and 22 percent, respectively). Weeks worked while age 15 averaged 27 weeks for white youths and 21 weeks for both black and Hispanic youths.

Employment While in School

Thirty-six percent of enrolled youths ages 14 to 16 had worked at an employee job at some point while school was in session during the 1996 calendar year; 28 percent worked both while school was in session and also during the summer, and 8 percent worked only during the school months. An additional 6 percent worked only during the summer months. (See table 3.) Even at these young ages, a group comprising nearly 30 percent of all students had established a fairly strong attachment to the formal labor market and worked far more intensively than students employed in only the school or summer months; these youths worked 59 percent of the school weeks and 77 percent of the summer weeks. In contrast, youths who worked only during the summer worked 54 percent of the summer weeks, and those who worked only during the school year worked only 23 percent of the school weeks.

Male youths were more likely to work in employee jobs during the school year than female youths (39 percent and 34 percent, respectively). The difference in employment occurs because male youths were more likely than female youths to work during both school and summer months. Among those who worked, there was little difference between the sexes in the percent of weeks worked.

Approximately 43 percent of whites ages 14 to 16 worked in employee jobs during the school year, compared with 24 percent of Hispanics and 21 percent of blacks. Whites were more likely to work during both school and summer months (34 percent) than either blacks (14 percent) or Hispanics (16 percent).

Educational Experiences

Of youths who had attended ninth grade or higher in 1997, 14 percent had been retained a grade at some point in their schooling, while 2 percent had ever skipped a grade. (See table 4.) Male youths were more likely than female youths to be retained and less likely to have skipped a grade. Blacks were more likely than whites to be retained, but also more likely to have skipped a grade.

Sixteen percent of youths who had attended ninth grade or higher in 1997 had been involved in gifted and talented programs. A nearly equal percentage, 14 percent, had taken remedial math or English classes. Male youths were more likely than female youths to have taken remedial classes. Whites were nearly twice as likely as either blacks or Hispanics to have been in gifted and talented programs.

Home Characteristics

A majority (58 percent) of youths ages 12 to 15 have a computer at home, with whites more likely to have one (66 percent) than blacks (36 percent) or Hispanics (38 percent). (See table 5.) Youths ages 14 to 15 who were currently working were more likely to have a computer at home. Nearly all youths (90 percent) had a quiet place to study.

Youths ages 12 to 15 ate dinner with their families an average of 5 nights a week and did something "fun" with their family nearly 3 days a week. White youths ate dinner with their families nearly one more day a week than blacks, while blacks did something religious with their families twice a week, compared with about one-and-a-half days a week for whites and Hispanics. Youths ages 14 to 15 who were currently working spent the same number of days per week engaged in family activities as those who were not currently working.

On average, youths ages 12 to 15 spent 17.2 hours per week watching television, compared with 5.9 hours per week doing homework and 4.7 hours per week reading for pleasure. Female youths spent slightly more time than male youths doing homework and reading for pleasure and slightly less time watching television. Black youths spent more time watching television than whites or Hispanics. Among 14 to 15 year olds, working made little difference in the number of hours spent doing homework or reading for pleasure; however, working youths spent less time watching television.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release were obtained using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). This survey is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and the Center for Human Resource Research at The Ohio State University, under the direction and sponsorship of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Partial funding support for the survey is provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the Department of Justice, the National School to Work Office of the Department of Education and the Department of Labor, and the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Sample

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 is a nationally representative sample of 9,022 young men and women who were 12 to 17 years of age when first surveyed in 1997. This sample of over 9,000 youths is composed of two subsamples: a cross-sectional sample designed to represent the noninstitutionalized, civilian segment of young people living in the U.S. in 1997 and born between January 1, 1980, and December 31, 1984; and a supplemental sample of youths designed to oversample Hispanic and black youths living in the U.S. in 1997 and born between January 1, 1980, and December 31, 1984. All results are weighted using the 1997 survey weights that correct for oversampling. When weighted, the data are representative of all Americans living in the U.S. in 1997 and born from 1980 to 1984.

The NLSY97 is the newest survey in the National Longitudinal Surveys Program. The NLSY97 collects extensive information on youths' labor market behavior and education experiences. Data on family and community backgrounds are included in the survey. In the first round of the survey, one of the youths' resident parents or parent figures also completed an hour-long interview.

Definitions

Freelance job. A freelance job is doing one or a few tasks without a specific "boss", like baby-sitting or mowing lawns, or working for oneself.

Employee job. An employee job is where the youth has an on-going relationship with a particular employer such as working in a supermarket or restaurant.

The respondent is read the following introduction prior to survey questions about freelance and employee jobs:

"We are going to discuss two sorts of jobs with you. We'll call one type working as a freelancer or being self-employed: that is, working one or a few tasks for several people and not having a "boss" (for example, baby-sitting or mowing lawns) or working for yourself (for example, running a business).

We'll refer to the second type as working as an employee: that is, you had an on-going relationship with a particular employer (for example, working in a supermarket or restaurant, or being in the military)."

Work activities. Work activities include any paid employment, or any work done for a family business with or without pay. This includes both freelance and employee jobs.

Usual hourly earnings. Usual hourly earnings includes tips, commissions, overtime, and bonuses. Wages greater than $30.00 per hour and less than $1.00 per hour were not included in the analysis.

Hours per Week Spent on Activities. Youths reporting that, during a typical week, they spent more than 10 hours a day, or 20 hours during the weekend, doing any one activity, such as doing homework or watching TV, were not included in the analysis of that activity.

Fun Activity. To define the number of days a week the family engages in a "fun" activity, the respondent is asked, "In a typical week, how many days from 0 to 7 do you do something fun as a family, such as play a game, go to a sporting event, go swimming, and so forth?"

Religious Activity. To define the number of days a week a family engages in a religious activity, the respondent is asked, "In a typical week, how many days from 0 to 7 do you do something religious as a family, such as go to church, pray, or read the scriptures together?"

Race and ethnicity groups. In this release, the findings are reported for the following three groups: white (non-Hispanics), blacks (non-Hispanics), and Hispanics. These three groups are mutually exclusive but not exhaustive. American Indians, Alaskan natives, and Asians and Pacific Islanders are included in the totals but not shown separately. The race and ethnic categories used in this release are different from those used in other BLS publications. In other BLS publications, estimates are often published for the following groups: whites, blacks, and those of Hispanic origin. These groups are not mutually exclusive, as Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-606-STAT; TDD phone: 202-606-5897; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-326-2577.

Table 1. Percent employed of individuals aged 14 to 15 in 1994-97: Individuals aged 14 to 16 on December 31, 1996, by type of job, sex, race, and Hispanic origin

Age in 1994-97 and characteristic	Percent employed					
	Any job	Any employee job	Any freelance job	Employee jobs only	Freelance jobs only	Both employee and freelance jobs
Total, while age 14	57.2	23.8	42.8	14.4	33.3	9.4
Male youths	55.2	28.1	36.8	18.5	27.1	9.7
Female youths	59.2	19.3	49.1	10.1	39.9	9.2
White	64.3	27.5	48.3	16.1	36.8	11.4
Black	43.3	16.0	33.1	10.2	27.3	5.8
Hispanic origin	41.3	16.7	30.1	11.3	24.6	5.4
Total, while age 15	63.7	37.6	39.8	23.9	26.1	13.7
Male youths	63.4	41.5	34.1	29.3	21.9	12.2
Female youths	64.1	33.5	45.8	18.2	30.6	15.3
White	71.8	44.0	44.8	27.0	27.9	17.0
Black	43.6	22.2	28.7	14.9	21.4	7.3
Hispanic origin	47.9	26.5	28.1	19.8	21.4	6.7

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive. Totals include American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Asian and Pacific Islanders not shown separately. "While age 14" refers to the entire year between the individuals' 14th and 15th birthdays. The first six rows exclude individuals who were not yet 15 years of age when interviewed. "While age 15" refers to the entire year between the individuals' 15th and 16th birthdays. The last six rows exclude individuals who were not yet 16 years of age when interviewed.

Table 2. Percent with an employee job, average number of weeks worked, and average hourly earnings of individuals aged 14 to 15 in 1994-97: Individuals aged 14 to 16 on December 31, 1996, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin

Age in 1994-97 and characteristic	Percent with an employee job	Average number of weeks worked	Average hourly earnings (in January 1997 dollars)
Total, while age 14	23.8	24.6	$5.53
Male youths	28.1	24.6	5.73
Female youths	19.3	24.6	5.20
White	27.5	26.3	5.46
Black	16.0	17.0	5.48
Hispanic origin	16.7	17.9	6.06
Total, while age 15	37.6	25.9	5.71
Male youths	41.5	27.2	5.82
Female youths	33.5	24.1	5.58
White	44.0	27.1	5.66
Black	22.2	20.6	5.90
Hispanic origin	26.5	20.5	5.59

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive. Totals include American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Asian and Pacific Islanders not shown separately. "While age 14" refers to the entire year between the individuals' 14th and 15th birthdays. The first six rows exclude individuals who were not yet 15 years of age when interviewed. "While age 15" refers to the entire year between the individuals' 15th and 16th birthdays. The last six rows exclude individuals who were not yet 16 years of age when interviewed. Due to rounding, columns will not always add to totals. The CPI-U was used to deflate hourly earnings to January 1997 dollars.

Table 3. Percent employed in employee jobs and percent of weeks worked in 1996 during the school year and/or during the summer among youths enrolled in school: Individuals aged 15 to 16 on December 31, 1996, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin

Characteristic	Percent employed	Percent of weeks employed	
		School year[1]	Summer[2]
Employed during both the summer and the school year			
Total	28.2	58.9	77.1
Male youths	30.4	60.6	77.0
Female youths	25.9	56.8	77.1
White	34.3	60.2	77.8
Black	13.6	50.1	71.8
Hispanic origin	16.0	50.7	72.5
Employed only during the school year			
Total	8.0	23.0	--
Male youths	8.2	23.3	--
Female youths	7.7	22.7	--
White	8.4	23.1	--
Black	7.5	23.9	--
Hispanic origin	7.6	21.3	--
Employed only during the summer			
Total	6.4	--	53.6
Male youths	6.9	--	53.8
Female youths	5.8	--	53.5
White	6.1	--	55.0
Black	7.2	--	55.5
Hispanic origin	6.2	--	54.0

[1] The school year is defined as the 37-week period from January 7 through June 1, 1996, and September 1 through December 21, 1996.

[2] Summer is defined as the 13-week period from June 2 through August 31, 1996.

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive. Totals include American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Asian and Pacific Islanders not shown separately. Youth who have dropped out of school or have graduated from high school anytime during 1996 are not included in the calculations. All columns exclude youth who have not turned 14 years of age by January 1, 1996.

Table 4. Percent with various educational experiences of youths in 1997 who had attended 9th grade or higher in 1997: Individuals aged 12 to 16 as of December 31, 1996, by sex, race, and Hispanicorigin

Characteristic	Percent of youths			
	Ever retained a grade	Ever skipped a grade	Ever in gifted and talented program	Ever took remedial classes
Total	13.9	2.3	15.6	14.2
Male youths	16.7	1.7	14.7	15.5
Female youths	11.1	2.9	16.5	12.9
White	11.2	1.9	17.9	14.3
Black	26.1	3.7	9.1	17.5
Hispanic origin	16.1	2.4	8.5	10.6

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive. Totals include American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Asian and Pacific Islanders not shown separately. All data in this table are reported by the parent.

Table 5. Home characteristics of individuals aged 12 to 15 in 1997: Individuals aged 12 to 14 on December 31, 1996, by age, race, sex, Hispanic origin, and employment status

Characteristic	Percent of youths that[1]		Average number of days per week that youths[2]			Average number of hours per week that youths[3]		
	Have a computer at home	Have a quiet place to study	Have dinner with the family	Do something fun with the family	Do something religious with the family	Spent doing homework	Spent watching TV	Spent reading for pleasure
Total	58.1	90.1	5.2	2.7	1.5	5.9	17.2	4.7
Male youths	57.9	90.6	5.3	2.7	1.5	5.3	17.9	4.1
Female youths	58.3	89.6	5.0	2.6	1.6	6.6	16.5	5.2
White	66.3	91.2	5.4	2.7	1.4	5.8	15.6	4.7
Black	35.9	87.2	4.6	2.8	2.1	5.7	22.9	4.7
Hispanic origin	37.9	87.7	5.0	2.6	1.5	6.6	18.7	4.7
Ages 12 - 13	57.6	89.2	5.4	2.9	1.7	5.8	17.1	4.7
Ages 14 - 15	58.7	91.1	5.0	2.5	1.4	6.1	17.2	4.8
Currently working	66.9	93.3	5.1	2.5	1.4	6.2	15.6	4.7
Not currently working	53.2	89.6	4.9	2.4	1.4	6.0	18.4	4.8

[1] Reference period is the preceding month.

[2] Reference period is the number of days in a typical week.

[3] Reference period is number of hours in a typical week.

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive. Totals include American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Asian and Pacific Islanders not shown separately.

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